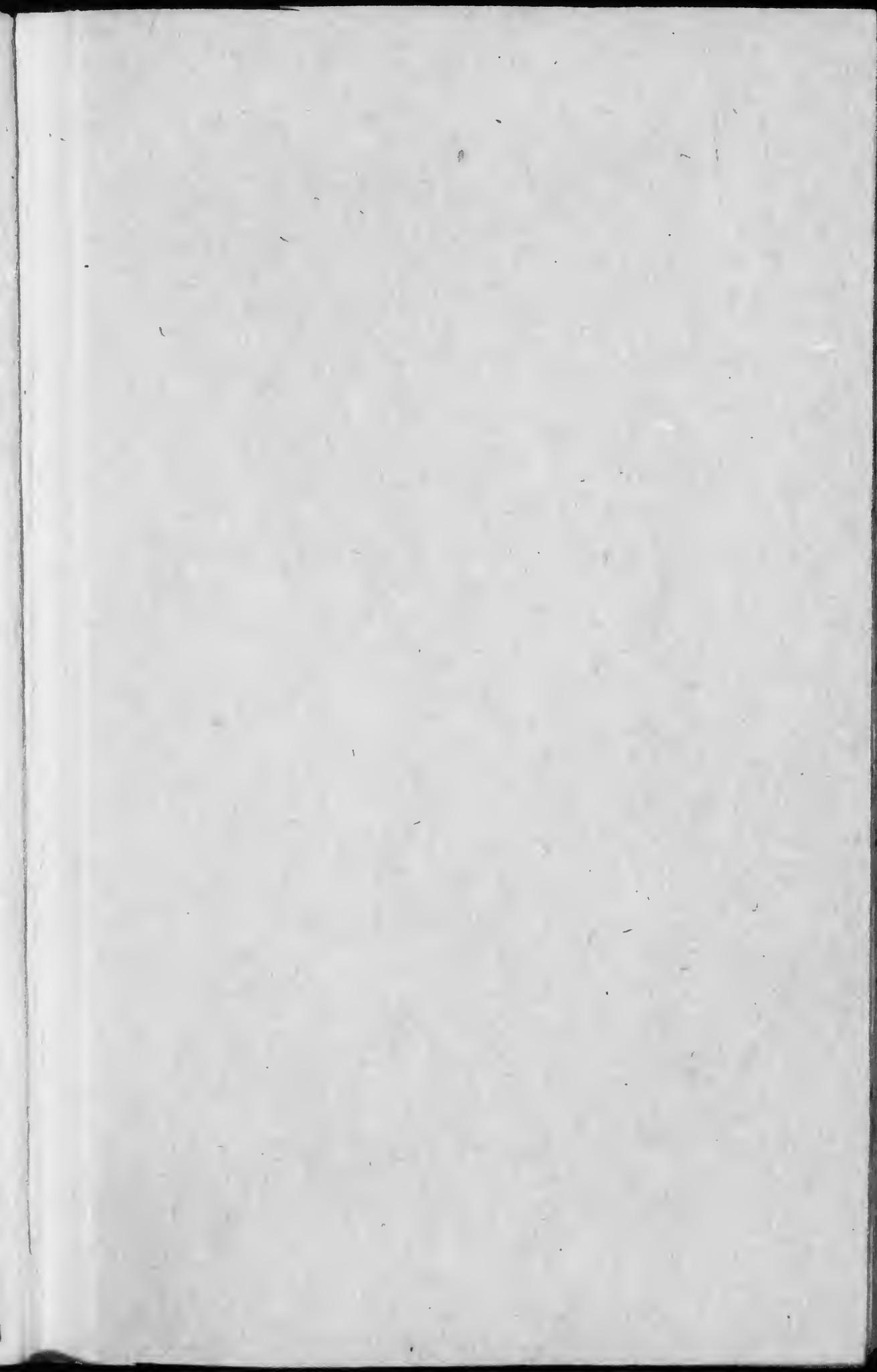
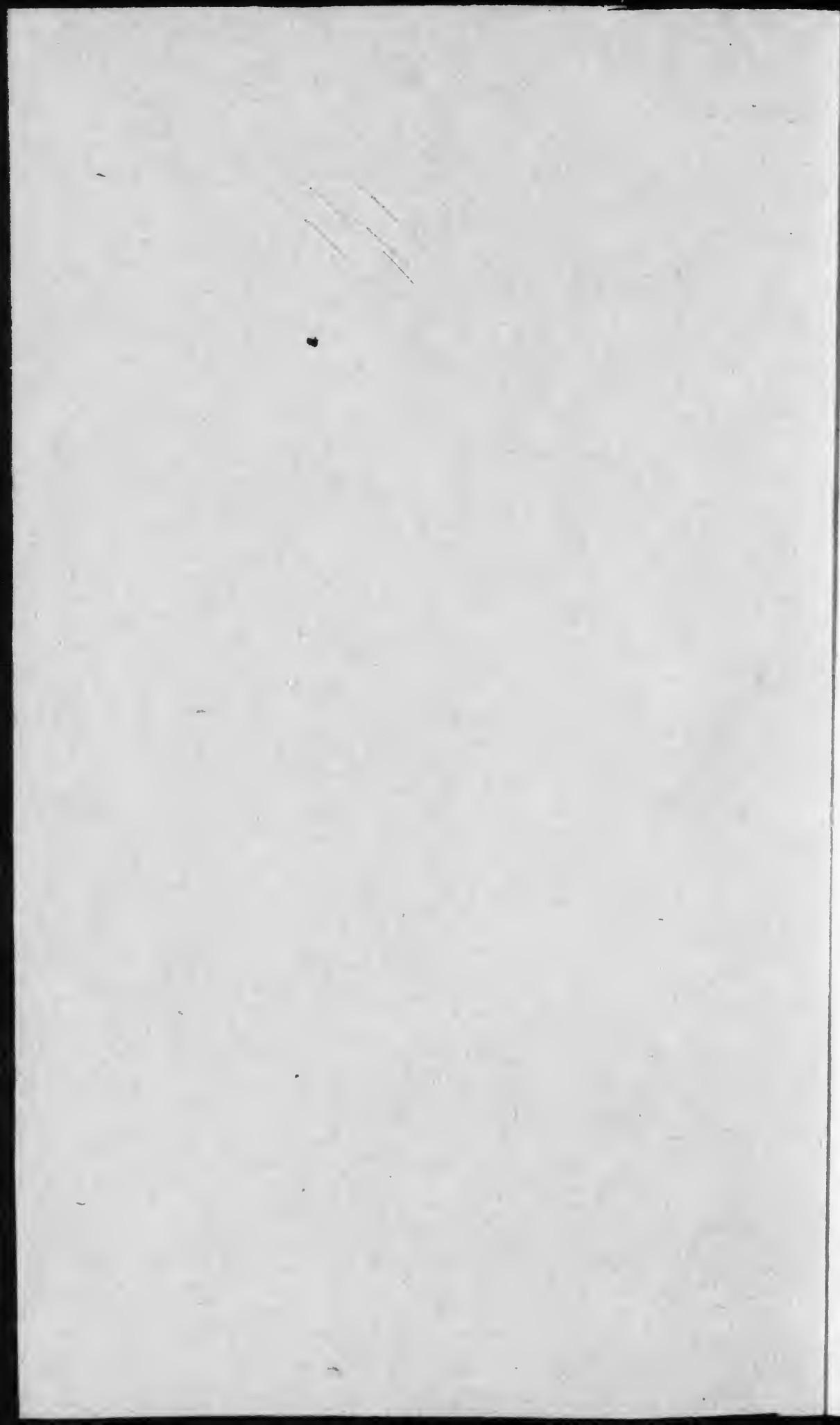


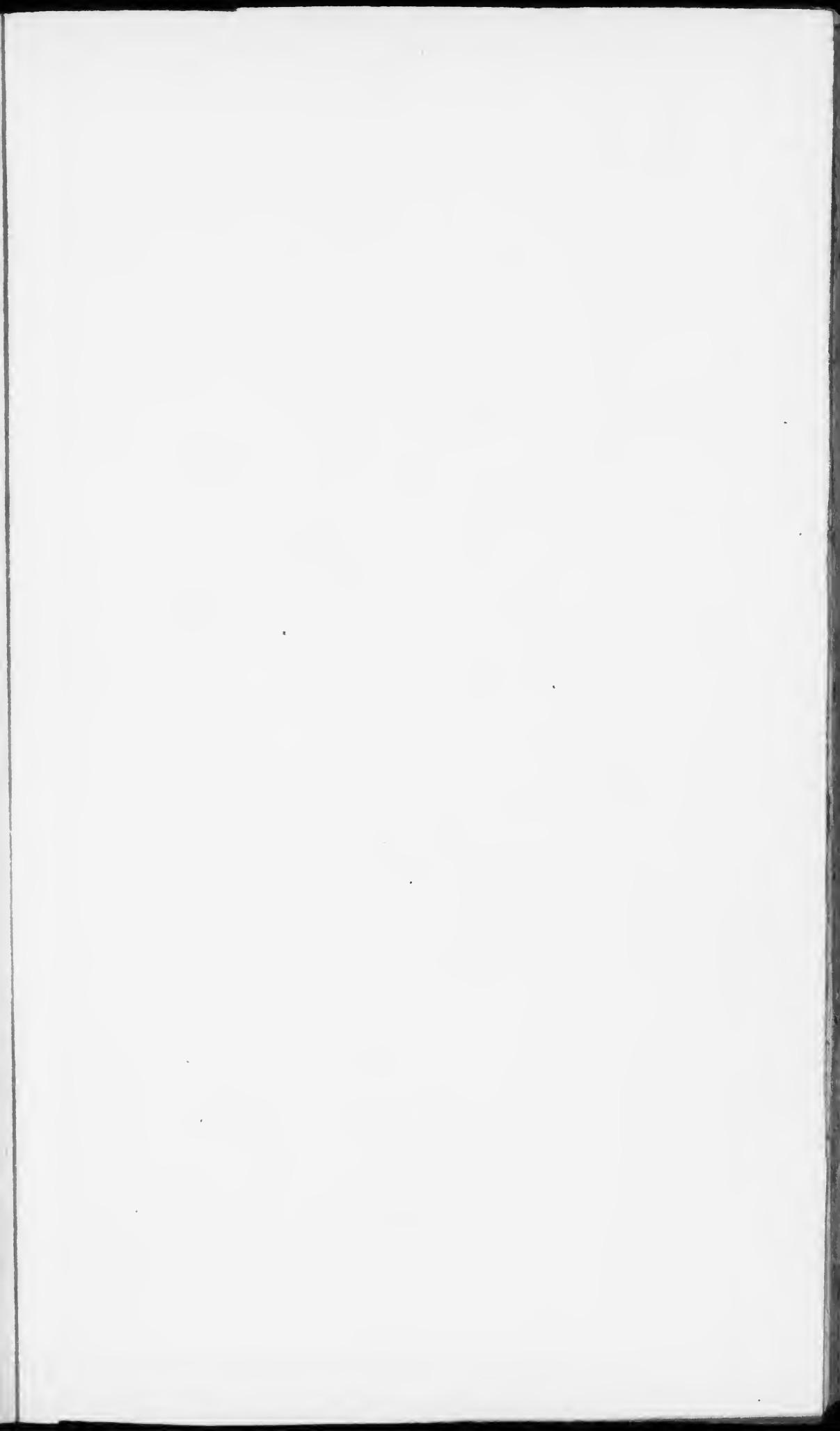
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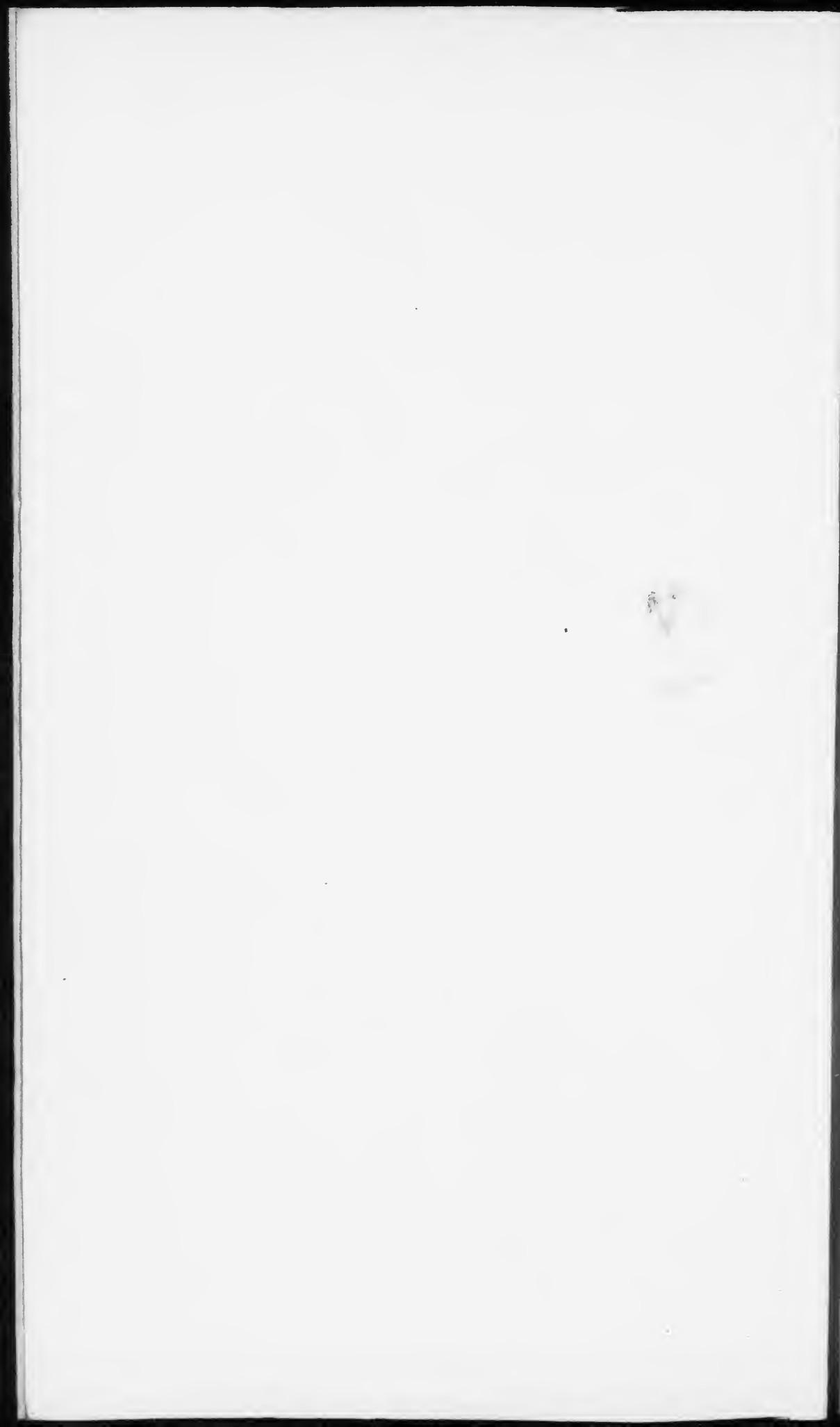


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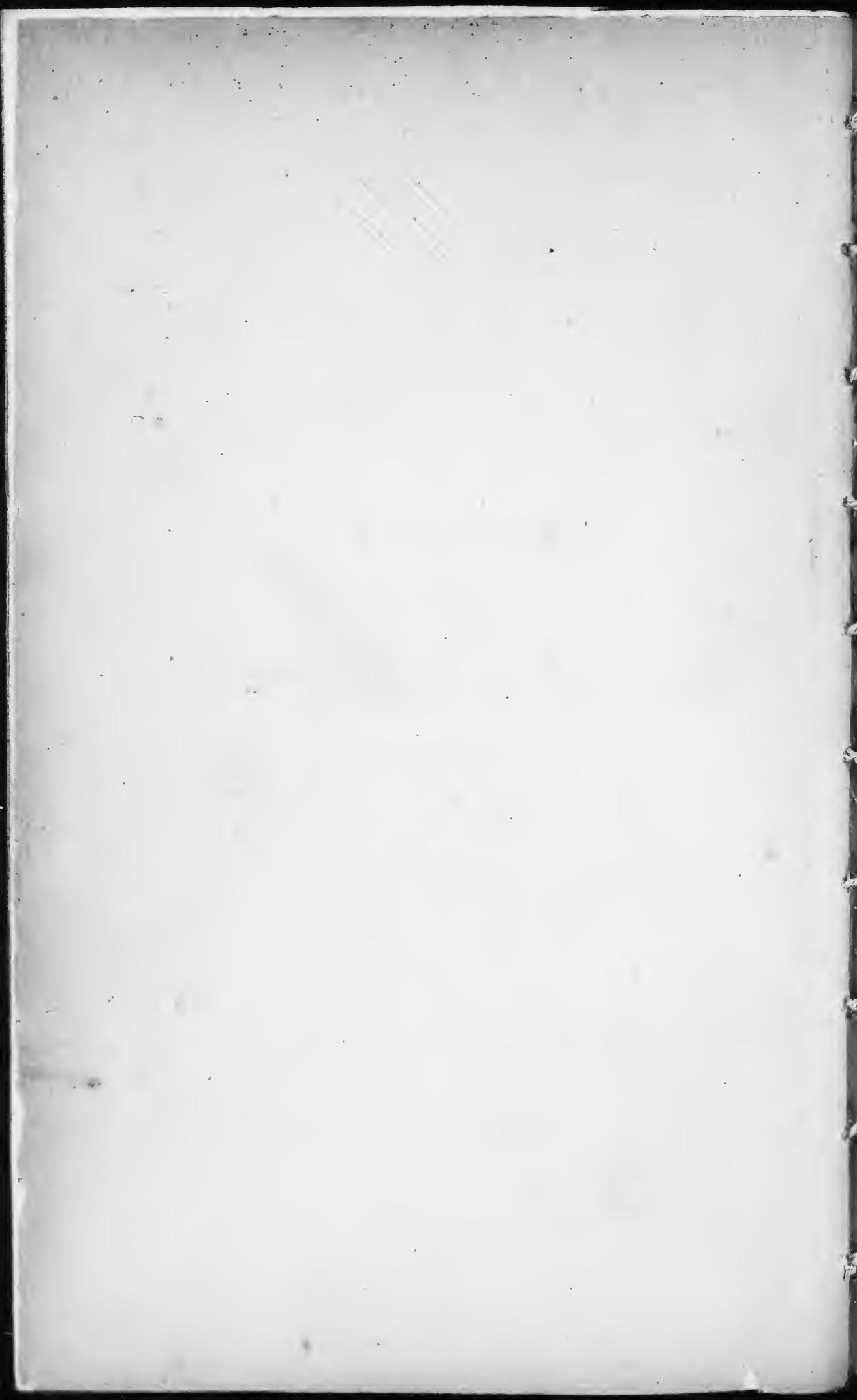




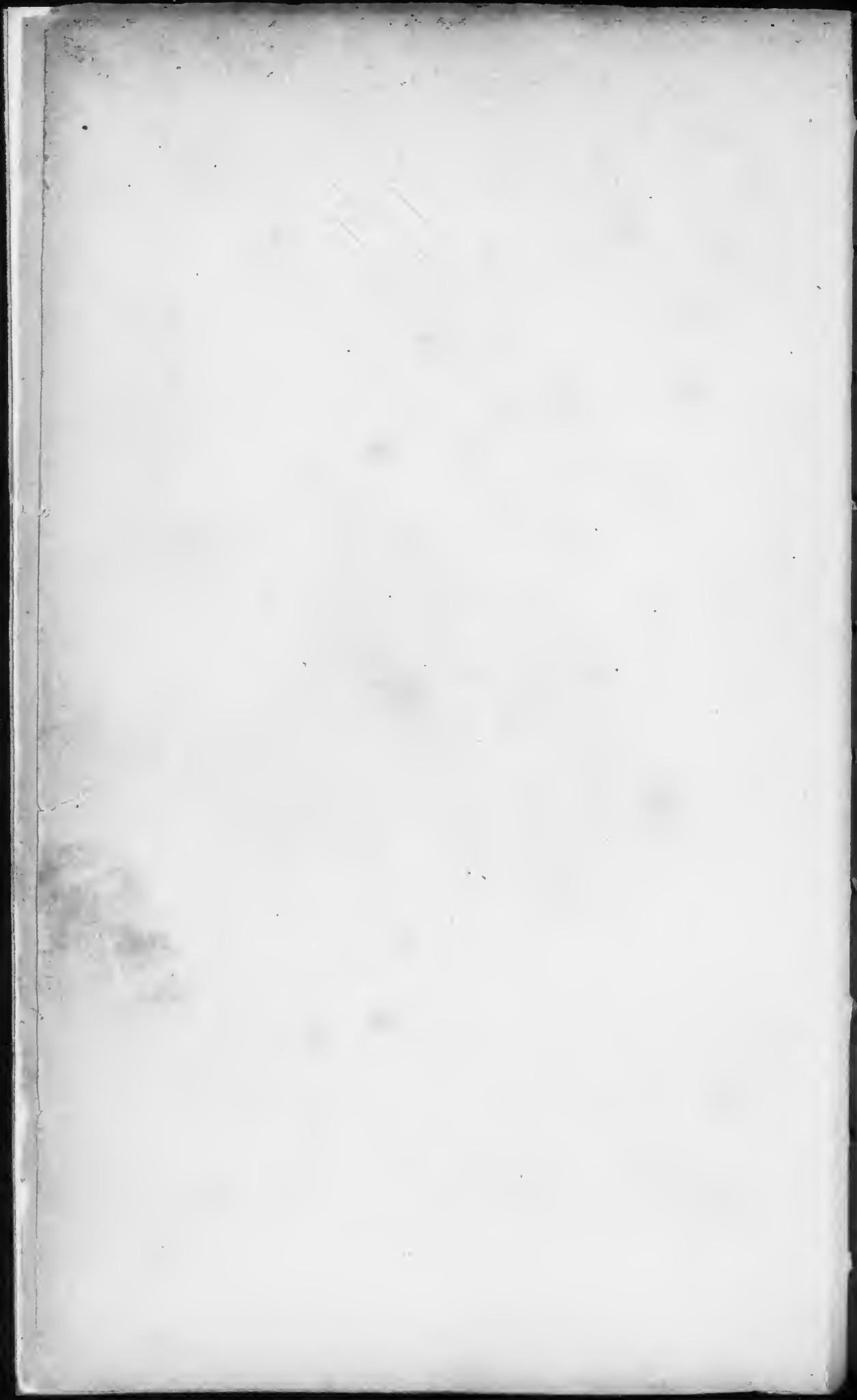




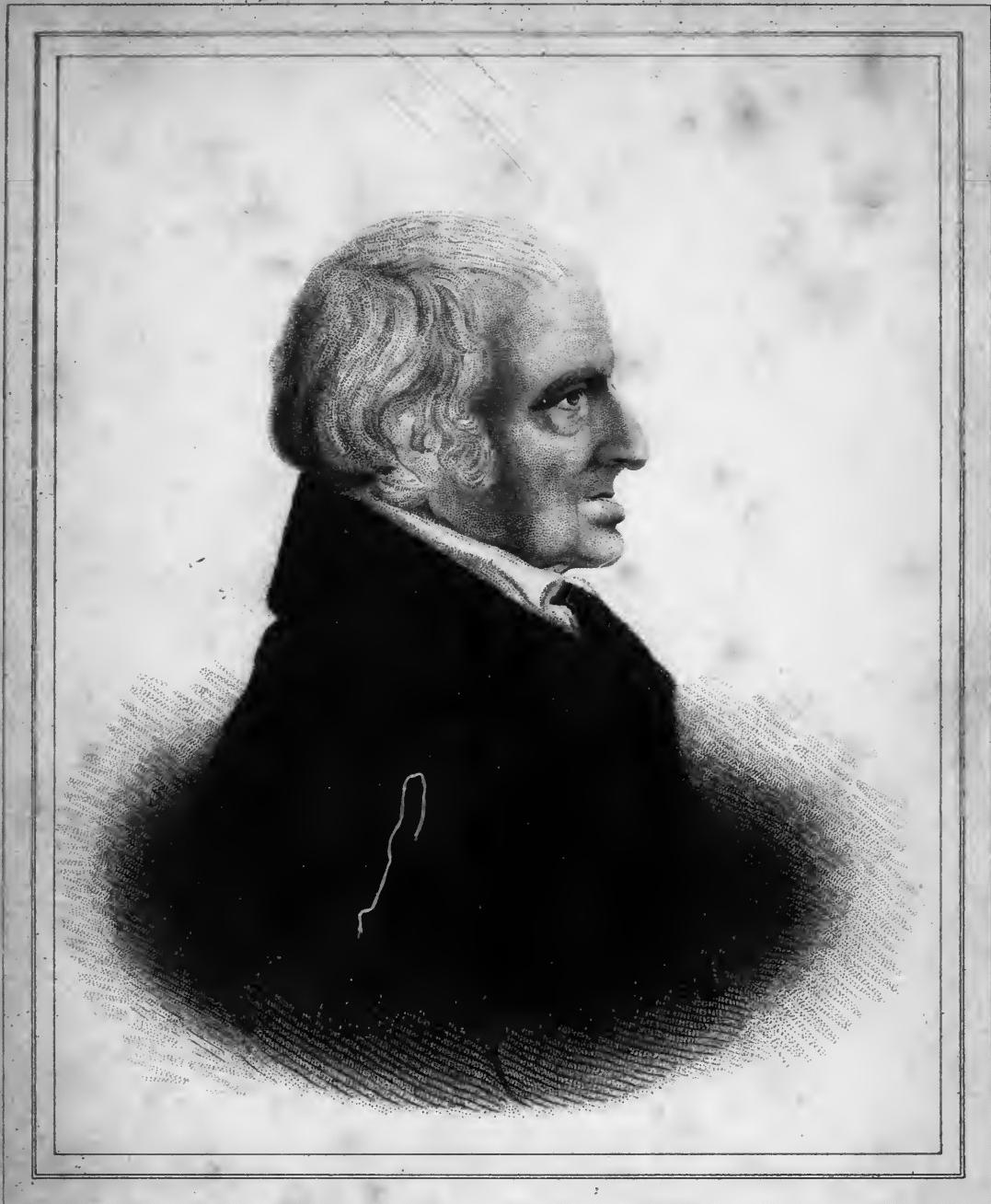
Rev George Green
late in his life
Dedbury



MEMORIALS
OF
WILLIAM CUMBERLAND.







Wm Cumberland.

931.7
50

MEMORIALS
of
WM. CUMBERLAND,
OF BEDFORD,

EDWARD OF FORTY YEARS A LEADER AND LOCAL
PRAEACHER AMONGST THE WESLEYAN
METHODISTS.

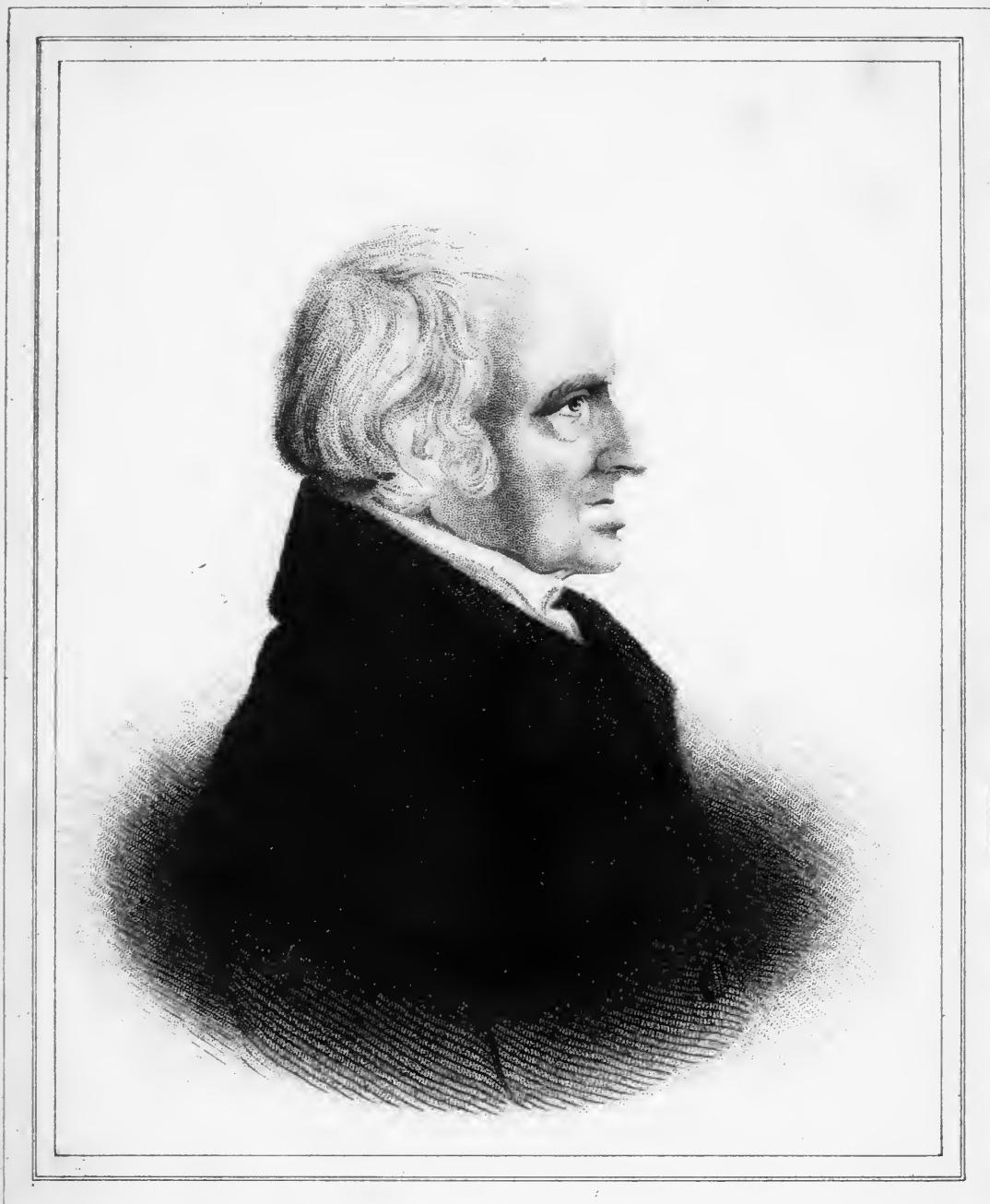
BY

JOHN GREEVES.

"In some lone ginn, where no man's hand is laid
To plumb, - are the timber'd up the rock
Or post of oak, or bowering shadow'd bay,
Stretch'd over the want, he reads of Jesus' song
Of shade & cheer of sin to carry with,
And wonders why he weeps." (See p. 13.)

LONDON:
J. MASON, PATERNOSTER ROW.
BEDFORD
W. WHITE, HIGH STREET.

M D C C C X X I V.



W^m Cumberland.

MEMORIALS OF
W. M. HUMBERLAND.

(CONTINUED.)

THESE MEMORIALS ARE TO BE READ IN THE
ORDER IN WHICH THEY ARE ARRANGED.

FIVE GALLIES.

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO ME TO ADD
THE FOLLOWING TO THE MEMORIALS
OF W. M. HUMBERLAND.
IT IS A PLEASURE, FOR REASONS WHICH I
CANNOT EXPLAIN, TO SEE HOW
THE HUMBLE AND HONEST MAN

IS SO OFTEN FORGOTTEN.
I AM SORRY TO SAY THAT THE HONORABLE
H. C. COOPER,
THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE STATE,



MEMORIALS

OF

922.7
50

WM. CUMBERLAND,
OF BEDFORD,

UPWARDS OF FORTY YEARS A LEADER AND LOCAL
PREACHER AMONGST THE WESLEYAN
METHODISTS.

BY

181

JOHN GREEVES.

—
“ In some lone glen, where every sound is lull'd
To slumber,—save the tinkling of the rill,
Or bleat of lamb, or hovering falcon's cry,
Stretch'd on the sward, he reads of Jesse's son ;
Or sheds a tear o'er him to Egypt sold,
And wonders why he weeps.”

(vide p. 13.)

—
L O N D O N :

J. MASON, PATERNOSTER ROW.

B E D F O R D :

W. WHITE, HIGH STREET.

—
M D C C C X X I V .

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Wes. 972

TO THE MEMBERS OF
THE WESLEYAN METHODIST SOCIETIES
IN BEDFORD,
ESPECIALLY TO THOSE WHO WERE
CONNECTED WITH THE
CLASSES UNDER THE CARE OF
THE LATE MR. WILLIAM CUMBERLAND,
THE FOLLOWING BRIEF ACCOUNT
OF THAT VENERABLE DISCIPLE,
DESIGNED AS
A MEMORIAL OF HIS DEPARTED WORTH,
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY
THEIR FRIEND AND PASTOR,
JOHN GREEVES.

NOTICE.

SHOULD any profits be realized by the sale of this publication, they will be appropriated towards the erection of a plain marble tablet to the memory, of the deceased in the Wesleyan Chapel.

PREFACE.

IT is an obvious disadvantage to the writer of a Memoir, to have been but partially acquainted with its subject. He must necessarily depend, in such a case, upon information at second hand; and many interesting circumstances will be omitted which a longer and more intimate acquaintance would have preserved. The subject of the present memoir was only personally known to his biographer during the last nine months of his earthly pilgrimage. Repeated proofs during that period were given that his personal attainments in religion were of no ordinary character; that the esteem in which he was held by the church and by the

world was such as could be secured only by many years of unblemished reputation ; and that his soul was fast ripening for the joys of eternity.

The materials for the composition of this little volume have been chiefly furnished by his daughter, Mrs. Allison. His biographer has made the best of them he could ; and, imperfect as these memorials are, he presents them to the public with the humble hope that as the task of preparing them for the press has had a salutary effect upon his own mind, they will not be wholly profitless to those who read them.

BEDFORD,
January 24, 1834.

CHAPTER I.

“A shepherd’s boy—he seeks no better name.”

NOTHING is more natural than the wish to perpetuate the memory of useful men; and amongst useful men (if a successful recommendation of religion to others be a valid title to the appellation) the subject of this memoir may be justly numbered. His usefulness, indeed, was limited, but it was at least commensurate with his means and opportunities; and more cannot be said of the most useful man that ever lived.

WILLIAM CUMBERLAND did not rank amongst the rich or the noble. He was of humble origin, and moved in an humble sphere. His father, James Cumberland, occupied a small farm at Odell, in Bedfordshire; where William was born in the year 1760. His mother’s maiden name was Perry. It was

his misfortune to lose her when he was about seven years of age ; a period at which the care and the counsel of a mother are peculiarly needed. She was, it appears, a woman of genuine piety : her affectionate tenderness, her maternal admonitions, her fervent ejaculations on his behalf (often placing him before her, stroking his hair, and exclaiming :—“ May the Lord bless you, my child ! ”) made an indelible impression upon his mind ; and the circumstance of his conversion to God was considered by him to be one reward of her believing and incessant prayers.

It does not appear that his father was equally attentive to the culture of his mind : probably through lack of means and opportunity. William, in a document written by him shortly before he died, says :—“ When I was about ten years old, my father sent me to keep sheep. I had to stand by them both Sundays and weekdays, in an open field. I seldom went to church ; and there were then no Sunday schools.” The want of education was always deplored by William Cumberland. He fre-

quently referred, in after life, to the superior advantages which are now offered to the children of the poor ; and was in the habit of urging parents thankfully to avail themselves of these evident openings of providence.

Some time after his mother's death, his father entered again into the marriage state ; and a numerous and increasing family, together with the extreme pressure of the times, led to an inevitable reverse of circumstances. William, after spending seven years in tending sheep, was obliged to seek out for other employment ; and feeling deeply his destitute and friendless condition,—“began,” as he says, “to pray to the Lord for pardon, and health, and happiness.” A sister of his father, Mrs. Purser, who resided at the Horse-and-Groom, Clapham, prevailed upon her husband to take him into his service ; and treated him with great kindness. But William, although by no means a decided character, was not there in his element. His associates, according to his own testimony, were men of dissolute habits, addicted to cursing and swearing ;—“and,” he adds, “my master

told me that I must swear too, or otherwise I should be imposed upon. I therefore took his advice, and strove to swear; but I could not swear like other people, and became miserable." He continued in this situation, exposed to many and great temptations, for one year; when he removed to Bedford, and hired himself as a shepherd to Mr. Purser, of St. Leonard's. Here he was employed in the open field, as formerly; and rarely attended a place of worship. Though he was the subject of frequent convictions, and formed repeated resolutions to give his heart to God, "evil was present with him;" cards, and songs, and other vain amusements, diverted his attention from weightier matters; and "how to perform that which was good he found not." At the end of his second year's engagement with Mr. Purser, he removed to Gamlingay, and was providentially placed in a family professing godliness. His master, Mr. William Careless, was a deacon of the baptist church; a man of strict integrity and exemplary piety. By him the duty of family prayer was constantly attended to, and every one con-

nected with the household was required to be present. This faithful disciple of Christ had learned, too, that the life of religion was best sustained by habitual communion with his Maker. It was his regular practice, early in a morning, to retire to an out-building, for the purpose of secret prayer. William, who had noticed his resorting to this place, followed for the purpose of listening : he was greatly affected by these fervent petitions, and often wished to be as happy as his master. Still Mr. Careless had not sufficient influence over him to induce him to accompany the family to the meeting.—“I foolishly thought it sufficient,” he records, “to be obliged to hear prayers in the house ; frequently under which I have fallen fast asleep. I was resolved to stick to the church, and therefore walked on a Sunday to Everton, to hear Mr. Berridge ; more, indeed, out of curiosity than with any better motive. The church used to be crowded, and many people were frequently crying for mercy ; whilst I, alas ! looked on unconcerned, wondering whatever it meant.”

Having completed his year at Gamlingay, he returned to his old master, Mr. Purser of St. Leonard's. Here he received a visit from a younger brother (James) who had recently been brought to an experimental acquaintance with religion, and was anxiously solicitous for William's spiritual welfare. It rarely happens, that an elder brother is disposed patiently to brook the reproofs and admonitions of a junior. When James, therefore, in the plenitude of his zeal, justly rebuked William for knocking some nails in his shoes on the morning of the Lord's Day, we cannot wonder that it should have excited ridicule and sneers: but William acknowledged, subsequently, that he felt the reproof, and that his conscience smote him. James was not to be intimidated; and, though baffled, was not discouraged: he talked seriously and faithfully to his brother, and used every argument in his power to produce conviction. William frequently related, with much feeling of affectionate remembrance, a stratagem employed by his zealous brother to direct his attention to the word of God. James had a

mince pie given to him ; and knowing how much such an article was relished by William, promised to share it with him, on condition that he would sit still, and listen attentively, while he read to him a chapter out of the bible. William assented ; he sat down ; he heard the sound of James's voice ; but alas ! alas ! his thoughts were on his share of the pie ; anticipation whetted his appetite ; and before James had proceeded many verses, William's impatience gave itself vent with the exclamation, —“Come, prithee give over, I want the pie !”

God will reward the zeal which is prompted by sincerity, however humble the instrument. James, indeed, had very little encouragement to hope that his efforts had been successful. His strictness of deportment and warmth of piety frequently subjected him to the taunts and ridicule of his less scrupulous brother ; who confessed, notwithstanding, that this visit from one so nearly related to him, and so evidently in earnest about the concerns of religion, had a tendency to increase those serious and awaking impressions, which were, ultimately, the

means of bringing him to Christ. And when describing the effects produced in him by the regenerating grace of God, he says;—“ I had a younger brother, James, who was in Christ before me. I formerly used to persecute him, and could not bear him, but now I loved him.” And may we not, under God, properly attribute the zealous efforts made, by the subject of this memoir, to produce serious impressions on the minds of his friends and neighbours, to the faithful example of his younger brother James? Ye youthful disciples of Christ, who venerate the memory of William Cumberland, and hope at last to be introduced by him to your glorious Redeemer as his spiritual children—“ Go ye and do likewise!”

CHAPTER II.

“ Stung by the scorpion sin,
My poor, expiring soul,
The balmy sound drinks in,
And is at once made whole.
See there my Lord upon the tree!
I hear, I feel, He died for me.”

WHEN the means employed to win a fellow sinner to Christ are productive of serious conviction, how busily does Satan exert himself to stifle it, either by the allurements of the world, or by painful and harrassing suggestions. And how rich is that gracious mercy which defeats the devices of this arch-enemy of mankind ; making his temptations and his terrors the means of expediting the deliverance of his intended victim. After his brother James had left him, William forsook the means of grace, and returned, for a season, to his vicious companions

and his evil courses. While out one night very late, playing at cards and singing songs, he lost what was, to him, a considerable sum of money. This vexed him sorely: he almost resolved to burn his cards, and to yield to the advice of his pious brother. But these resolutions, as he himself acknowledged, were made in his own strength; and for several years longer he continued a stranger to the saving grace of God. His own simple language shall detail the circumstances of his conversion.—“ My employment at Mr. Purser’s was in an open field, as formerly; and for the space of three or four years I seldom went to church, or any where else. I lay in the field until I became earthly, and sensual, and beastly, and devilish. From a child I had had repeated convictions, and often promised to be good; but I broke my resolutions as often as I made them. After having been in Mr. Purser’s service five years, I grew never the better, but worse.”—At length strong convictions seized him.—“ My sins became a burden too heavy for me to bear; and the cry of my heart was,—‘ Woe is me, for I am

undone !' I often went down into a gravel pit to hide myself from the world. I envied the whistling plough boy, and thought that all were happy but me. I felt afraid that the earth would open and swallow me up ; and that God would make me a monument of His displeasure : that I had committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, and that there was no mercy for me. In this dreadful state of mind I walked up and down the field, crying and praying ; but could feel no relief. I thought that the mercy of God was clean gone for ever ; and that I was a ruined young man. I seemed, to myself, to be possessed with a devil. I was full of blasphemies ; and was afraid to open my mouth even in prayer, lest I should curse God. One day, being in great agony of soul, greater than I can describe, I fell upon my knees amongst the sheep in the open air ; when, all at once, in a moment, the Lord spoke peace to my soul ; and with the eye of faith I saw my Saviour suspended on the cross for me. Immediately my heart broke, my sins fell off, and I cried—‘ Lord let me come to Thee : O let me

come to Thee !' I longed, if it were possible, to make God happier than He was : I longed to do something for Him, who had in a moment done so much for me."

This important crisis in the life of William Cumberland, took place in January, 1787 ; and without the assistance of those means and instruments which are generally employed to produce so great a work. He had never availed himself of social intercourse with any denomination of christians ; and in reference to the body of which, for nearly half a century, he was an unblemished ornament, so little had they attracted his observation, that he says,—“ I never heard the name of Methodist, till I came to Bedford ; and then I thought they were foreigners.” Curiosity, at that time, led him to the chapel once or twice, to hear Mr. Alderman Parker, and he liked him much ; but, as his master and mistress did not approve of his going, he desisted. How he was subsequently introduced amongst them, the continuation of his narrative will explain.—“ Being a stranger to the communion of saints, Satan soon tempted me to think I had

deceived myself; and I nearly lost my senses. I had no where to flee but to the scriptures; (for it was before I knew the Methodists) I compared my experience with them, and so got faith to believe that I was right. From that time the bible was a new book to me, and I always carried it in my pocket. It became the delight of my heart; and the love I felt, while reading it, towards the holy men who wrote it, I cannot describe. I knew not, sometimes, whether I was in the body or out of it. Frequently I sat under the hedge, and read, and wept, and rejoiced, and loved my Saviour, and all the prophets, and apostles; and was joined to [had communion with] the Jews before I knew any Gentiles." William soon, however, became convinced, that social intercourse with the living followers of Christ was desirable as a means of establishing him in the faith, and of enabling him, more fully, to appreciate the value of those pages in the perusal of which he had formed so delightful an acquaintance with the memorable saints whose piety they record. The mother of the young female to

whom he then paid his addresses, regularly attended the Methodist chapel; and William soon discovered that she was a woman of piety.—“I longed,” he says, “to tell her my feelings; but could not. I went to her, for this purpose, three times. At length, she asked me what was the matter. I burst into tears, and told her what God had done for my soul. She directed me to the chapel; and, I bless the Lord that I ever entered it. The first preachers I heard were Mr. Barnabas Thomas, and Mr. William Horner, who were then stationed in the Bedfordshire circuit. They appeared to me like angels sent from heaven. I loved the ground they trod upon. I wanted to do something for God and His people; and I said in my heart, ‘This people shall be my people, and their God shall be my God.’ I immediately joined the society; and have cause to be thankful, that I ever entered that ship, which has carried thousands over the flood safe.”—This clear and interesting account of the conversion of William Cumberland, given in his own artless language,

proves, that no circumstances, however apparently unfavourable, can obstruct the work of the Holy Spirit when once the heart fully yields to its influence. No employment seems to be more opposed to active habits, more calculated to encourage sloth, than that of a shepherd's boy: and, to man's thinking, nothing was less likely than for William Cumberland, in such a situation,—naturally averse from serious reflection, culpably negligent of the worship of God, perversely rejecting the pious counsel of his brother;—to become the subject of that “godly sorrow” which “worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.” James, on leaving him, was, very probably, disheartened and hopeless. But God is true to His promise,—“Cast thy bread upon the water, and it shall be seen after many days.” A mother's prayers and tears were bottled in heaven; a brother's labour of love was not to be forgotten;—and when the Spirit of God commenced His quickening operations, the very solitude, naturally conducive to supineness, became the means of fastening conviction on the mind of

William ; of setting his sins in order before his eyes ; of bringing to his recollection the fact, that James's admonitions were the echo of those of his sainted mother ; and of producing, first, that agony of remorse, and next, that vividness of faith, which instantaneously emancipated him from Satan's thraldom ; and excited a thrill, a burst, of joy

“ Through all the courts of paradise.”

CHAPTER III.

“Would aught on earth my wishes share,
Though dear as life the idol be,
That idol from my breast I’d tear,
Resolved to seek my all in Thee.”

WILLIAM no sooner became a partaker of the grace of God, than he found out the secret spring of his brother’s anxiety concerning him: and the zeal which he before censured he now appreciated, and wished to imitate. Judging how much it would rejoice James to hear of the great change which had been wrought in him, he sent him some information about it. James was incredulous, and required proof. But William himself shall relate the circumstance.—“I could not rest long without sending word to my brother James; who did not believe me. I, therefore, went over to him (about sixteen miles distant) and he soon found I was not a deceiver.

We met, and fell upon each other's neck, and wept for joy ; and, as soon as we were able, we burst out into singing,

‘ Come ye that love the Lord,
And let your joys be known, &c.’ ”

O how enviable were the feelings of both on that occasion ! James rejoiced that his prayers were thus unexpectedly answered ; and William exulted in having an opportunity of confirming the truth of an old adage—“ Seeing is believing.”

Methodism had not gained much ground in Bedford when William Cumberland was admitted into the society. The number of members in the town scarcely exceeded forty ; but he much enjoyed his class meetings, and made rapid advances in knowledge and in piety. Still he was not exempted from trials.—“ I met with much persecution,” he writes, “ but I could always pray for my enemies ; every thing seemed full of God and glory. Praise the Lord I can say, ‘ With my soul have I desired Thee in the night ; and with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early.’ ”

Many proofs were soon given by him that the change he had experienced was decisive. Of one of his sinful companions, William, in the days of his ignorance, had borrowed a large book, full of vain and wicked songs. This book, instead of returning it to its owner, he committed to the flames ; and, under the conviction that restitution was necessary, he purchased a bible for fifteen shillings ; which he presented as an equivalent for the destroyed property. William soon learned the happy art of speaking a word in season ; and adopted it with success. A short time after he became acquainted with divine things, when on a visit to his native village, he was thus accosted by an old man, who had formerly been in his father's employ :—“ Well, William, how does the world use you ? ” He replied,—“ My great business is so to use the world as to get safely out of it.” He continued to converse in a serious and faithful strain ; which so powerfully and effectually wrought upon the old man, that he was persuaded to change his course of life, became a converted character, and died

triumphantly. But the strongest proof of his decision of character was given in the following instance of painful sacrifice and self denial. Allusion has already been made to his having formed an acquaintance with a young female. She, unhappily, partook not of the piety of her mother. The change wrought upon William dissatisfied her. Instead of passing the time devoted to her society in giddy and profitless conversation, he was perpetually recommending religion, as the only and never-failing source of substantial happiness. She could not enter into his views and feelings, and was honest enough to tell him so. William's attachment was sincere; and with all the confidence of an inexperienced convert, he continued his attentions for some time; not doubting but that, by dint of perseverance, he should bring her to a better mind, and become instrumental to her conversion. With a view to this, he lent her pious books; he wrote to her several heart-searching letters; he prevailed upon her once, and only once, to accompany him to the chapel. The young woman had it in her power to deceive him, but it was

not in her heart to do it. She possessed not religion ; she saw not the necessity of seeking it ; and she had too much nobleness of mind to counterfeit it. Their disunion on this all-important topic was, to her, a source of discontent ; and, to him, of discouragement. Their interviews ceased to partake of that oneness of soul which is so essential to ensure happiness to an union for life. At length the pious mother interferred, and told William that she had first permitted him to visit her daughter, because she thought the acquaintance suitable :— “but you are now,” she continued, “a different character ; and it is of no use your thinking to make her your wife ; for, unless there be a great change in her, I am quite sure she will not suit you.” This was a sore trial to William ; but it was the path of duty, and he acquiesced. The acquaintance was broken off by mutual consent ; and, as William said,—“We parted friends.”

William, after these events, did not long continue in the employ of Mr. Purser. Wishing to obtain a situation in a serious family,

he hired himself to Mr. Anderson, a farmer at Essendon, near Hertford, who was a hearty Methodist, and an active local preacher. Here he soon felt himself at home, and enjoyed great happiness. With Mr. Anderson lived a widowed sister, who carried on the business of a shoe maker, and employed several hands. They were all praying people; and regularly held a prayer meeting every morning at five o'clock, before they went to work: and every Friday they conscientiously fasted until four in the afternoon. William frequently alluded to this period, as a season in which his soul prospered exceedingly. All his leisure time was spent in the workshop. His master noticed this, and said,—“I think, William, you would like to be a shoemaker.” His reply was,—“I always thought I should prefer it to any other trade.” His industrious habits and exemplary conduct, had secured the respect of his master, who consulted his sister: and it was at length arranged, that William should be transferred to the shop and the stall; and that another shepherd should be obtained to supply his place.

William was now settled to his heart's content; his shopmates were men of kindred spirits with himself, and one of them (William Warwick) he selected as his intimate friend. These pious companions were very solicitous to see and hear the venerable founder of Methodism, "whose praise was in all the churches." They obtained permission to visit the metropolis for this purpose, and started one Saturday morning on foot. A walk of about five-and-twenty miles brought them to the City-Road, where they received intelligence that Mr. Wesley would preach that evening at a chapel about five miles distant. Nothing daunted, they at once determined to encounter the additional fatigue of five miles and back again, rather than lose the profit and enjoyment of this extra service. Mr. Wesley was in the pulpit when they reached the chapel. The apostolical appearance of this great man, his hoary locks, his animated and cheerful countenance, at once excited reverence and affection in the minds of these zealous youths. But nothing astonished —nothing delighted them so much as the sim-

plicity with which one so renowned for his learning addressed a congregation of poor and illiterate but pious people. The following expressions William never forgot.—“Now don’t you see the force of this?”—“’Tis as plain as that two and two make four.”—“’Tis as easy as easy.”—The following day was a truly blessed Sabbath to them : and in proof of the primitive hospitality which at that time prevailed amongst the good Methodists in London, may be adduced the fact, that William and his companion, though perfect strangers, were not permitted to be at any expense ; but were kindly entertained during their stay by some pious friends in the vicinity of the chapel. They walked back to Essendon on the Monday following, and delighted and edified the pious household to which they belonged with a copious detail of all that they had seen, and heard and felt.

How sudden are the vicissitudes of human life ! William applied himself to his new trade with indefatigable diligence ; and was calculating upon a long continuance in his comfort-

able situation, when his mistress sickened and died. This unexpected event was the means of breaking up the shoemaking establishment; and William had not been at the trade more than six months before he was again thrown adrift upon the world. But there is no want to them that fear the Lord. William found, at this juncture, the value of a friend. The consequences of the widow's death were felt as much by Warwick as himself, and led them to mutual consultation and prayer. The result was, their determination to embark together in business at Bedford, as soon as an eligible situation presented itself. Warwick, being a proficient at the trade, was (as William expressed himself when stating the circumstance) "to find judgment;" and William, who had saved a little money, was to appropriate it to the necessary expenses of the undertaking.

The interval between this consultation and his settlement at Bedford, William spent with his brother James, at Ravenstone, in Buckinghamshire; where he distinguished himself by his active and fervent piety; zealously and suc-

cessfully warning the unruly, comforting the feeble minded, supporting the weak, and rendering blessing for cursing, and good for evil. Some seals to his laudable exertions in that place continue to this day; and greatly revere the memory of him who was instrumental in “plucking them as brands from the burning.”

CHAPTER IV.

“ Merciful God, how shall we raise
Our hearts to pay Thee all Thy praise ?
Our hearts shall beat for Thee alone ;
Our lives shall make Thy goodness known ;
Our souls and bodies shall be Thine,
A living sacrifice divine.

IT was in the year 1790 that the subject of this memoir and his friend William Warwick took up their residence in a humble dwelling situated in St. Mary's, Bedford ; and commenced business for themselves. They were welcomed by the Methodists as a valuable addition to their little community, and every encouragement was immediately offered them. Notwithstanding some difficulties, they spent about two years together very comfortably ;

when Warwick married a person who carried on a more lucrative business. To that business Warwick devoted his attention, and left his friend to the entire responsibility and management of the concern in St. Mary's.

Shortly after Warwick left him, William Cumberland made choice of Elizabeth Clare (a pious and respectable member of the Methodist society) as a partner for life. She was a few years older than himself, and had joined the Methodists when very young, in the year 1773. William found in her a true help-mate. By their united economy and industry, the blessing of God being with them, they prospered in business; brought up their two daughters in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and lived to see them decided Christians and comfortably settled in life. According to their ability, William and his amiable wife anxiously sought to promote the prosperity of the little flock to which they were joined in Christian fellowship; and gladly welcomed the preachers as their guests in their turn, for several years; until a division of the circuit rendered it unnecessary.

After living together in uninterrupted harmony for thirty six years, death dissolved the endearing tie. In 1828, Elizabeth Cumberland, having adorned the doctrine of God her Saviour upwards of fifty years both in health and sickness ; exchanged labour for rest, pain for ease, and earth for heaven. During the mortal conflict she was favoured with much of the Divine presence ; and, as her happy spirit took its flight, she triumphantly shouted,—“Glory to God.” This was the severest stroke which William ever experienced ; for in her he found an invaluable friend.—“When at any time I was cast down,” he would say, “she always pointed me to the Rock which was higher than ourselves.” The happy thought of meeting her again frequently overcame his feelings, especially during his last affliction. So true and so cheering is the sentiment of Paul,—“Ye sorrow not even as others who have no hope.”

It is highly probable that, during the space of forty years, many striking incidents would occur in the life and experience of a man so active and so pious as was the subject of this

memoir ; and as the decay of nature in him was gradual, his biographer thought he had hit upon an effectual method to secure ample information, by requesting William to employ as much time as he could, without fatigue, in recording the most remarkable events of his pilgrimage. He consented to this; but the request was made by one who had not sufficiently marked the bias of his mind. William considered the most remarkable events to be,—the means which led to his conversion ; his connection with the Methodists , and his experience in the hour of death. Any information that even indirectly would have thrown light upon the rigid consistency of his character, his growth in piety, his good report of them that are without, is entirely withheld. His memorialist, under these circumstances, can only fill up the chasm between his settlement in Bedford and his last illness, by an attempt briefly to delineate his character as a class leader ; as a local preacher ; and as a conscientious and decided Christian.

The marriage of William Cumberland did not long precede his appointment to the impor-

tant and responsible office of leader ; an office for which his piety, his zeal, and his intimate acquaintance with the word of God peculiarly qualified him. How well he was received in this capacity appears from the fact that there are very few amongst the surviving members of the Methodist society in Bedford, who did not at one period or another meet in his class. He commenced with less than twelve ; and it continued to increase until it became the largest in the town. This is attributable, in part, to his indefatigable attention to the outward hearers. He soon recognized such in the congregation ; sought them out ; apprized them of the advantages of christian communion ; and encouraged them to give the right-hand of fellowship to the people of God. His anxious solicitude for those who, having once run well, had turned aside ; and whom by every persuasive argument he urged to re-trace their steps ; was an additional means of its increase. So likewise were his winning deportment towards young persons, and his indefatigable exertions to secure from those committed to his care a constant

attendance upon the means of grace, or a sufficient reason for their absence from them. He had talents peculiarly adapted to encourage penitents to seek for a present salvation, and to urge believers to press on towards perfection. If he failed in any part of this work, it was in occasionally “sparing the rod” when castigation was needed. He erred on mercy’s side: but he had all the tenderness of a loving father, and often won by his tenderness those whom severity might have hardened. He was regular in his attendance at the leaders’ meetings; and when absent through unavoidable necessity, his class-book was always sent, and the occasion of his absence assigned. In a word, he had the full confidence of his brethren, and the warm affection of his class-mates. For several years before his death upwards of sixty members were committed to his care; and when his extreme feebleness compelled him to resign his office, the number amounted to nearly eighty. His retirement from active secular employment gave him frequent opportunities of visiting them at their houses, and of administering to them his

fatherly counsel. When disabled from meeting them himself, his great concern for their future spiritual welfare was strikingly exhibited by the restless anxiety with which he assisted the superintendant preacher to look out for suitable successors : which anxiety never ceased until he had satisfactory assurance that those appointed to succeed him were well received, and promised to be very useful. And whilst suffering under the decay of nature, and endeavouring to while away the lingering hours by taking up his pen to record his experience, what could more strikingly prove his disinterested attachment to his classes than the following striking remark ; which may indeed be considered as his dying advice to them, and to all his religious associates ?—“ It is forty and six years since I entered the ship belonging to the Methodists ; and I have sailed with Christ in the ship, together with my wife and children. Blessed be the Lord, I have never left it since I entered : it has carried thousands over the flood safe, and is now as sound as ever. Therefore, my beloved, abide in the ship. It is like the robe and the shoes which the Lord gave me when I

first believed. They have neither waxed old, nor wanted repairing; although my journey has been long, and I have had some rough and flinty road to pass over. The Lord says,—‘Thy shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy day so thy strength shall be.’ Bless the Lord, O my soul, for such a promise.”

CHAPTER V.

"No matter how blunt the instrument, if red-hot it will make an impression, and a deep one too."

NONE who are acquainted with the economy of Methodism, and the admirable tact and facility with which it brings into its service whatever zeal and talents its members may possess, will be surprised that William Cumberland should have been called to exercise in a more public manner than the mere office of leader admitted. How soon after his settlement at Bedford he was put upon the local preachers' plan cannot be correctly ascertained; but from a list left by Mr. Jonathan Coussins, dated July 18th, 1796, it appears that only three local preachers were then residents in the town; viz.—William

Cumberland, Francis Downman, and John Bowers: the two last being members of William's class. He first opened his commission as a herald of salvation, at Great Barford ;— “where,” he said at the time, “I think I shall never go any more, for I have told them all I know.” During the early part of his career as a local preacher, he had to brook, in common with his brethren, the taunts and revilings of a jeering multitude.—“As I walked along to the preaching house,” he records, “I was generally saluted with some hearty amens : frequently was I hooted; but I never had the honour to be pelted.” Nevertheless, his duty was his delight; and he never flinched from it. However stormy the weather, however bad the roads, however distant the place, he was always at his post; and generally returned to his family, after a dark, long, and wearisome walk, with his heart full of love, and with the oft-repeated exclamation,—“Blessed be God, I have had another good day, and have come on my way rejoicing.”

William's talent for preaching, it must be

confessed, was rather below mediocrity than above it. His style was always very homely, and sometimes degenerated into coarseness, or ludicrousness : but his simplicity and sincerity, united with great faithfulness, a peculiar adaptation of scripture phraseology, and a manner exceedingly earnest, affectionate, and winning ; rendered him not only acceptable, but even popular, wherever he went. All loved the man, and therefore heard him with pleasure and profit. God employed him in this way as an instrument of extensive good ; and thus sanctioned the striking remark made by William, during his last affliction, concerning preachers of his stamp.—“No matter how blunt the instrument ; if red-fire hot it will make an impression, and a deep one too.” Thus it proved in reference to himself. “He seldom stood up,” says one who frequently heard him, “but great feeling was soon manifested. Hearts were warmed, tears flowed apace, and all got a blessing. Yet at times few could help smiling at the manner, while they were delighted with the ideas he would set before them.” He was usu-

ally quite at home in the pulpit ; and never at a loss for words : for if he produced not from his text the necessary quantity of matter, his own experience supplied the deficiency. On one occasion, when called to exercise in public before several preachers, he was asked,—“ Don’t you feel confused when you stand up before so many critics ? ”—“ Not at all,” was his reply, “ I had rather preach in my way before those who are accustomed to the work, than before any other men ; for I always think that they are the best able to feel and to pray for me, and to pass over my blunders.” A friend to order and method said to him, on another occasion,—“ How is it, Mr. Cumberland, that you do not get into the way of dividing your sermons ? ”—“ O,” replied he, “ God does not give them me by piece-meal ; I have them from Him altogether, and so I give them to you.” This remark, however, produced some effect ; for amongst his papers were found a few attempts at skeletonizing ; two of which, to gratify the reader’s curiosity, and to corroborate the preceding remarks, are here introduced.

GENESIS xxiv. 63.

And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the even-tide.

Let us meditate on

- I. What sin has done.
 - II. What sinners we have been, and into what distress it has brought us.
 - III. The promises of mercy on condition of repentance and faith.
 - IV. The willingness there is in the Lord to save.
-

1 PETER, ii. 2.

As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.

How does the new-born babe desire the milk? Four ways:

- I. It covets it, and nothing will do but the milk.
 - II. It desires it through a sense of want.
 - III. It desires it as nature has prepared it.
 - IV. It hunts for it, and struggles for it.
-

The following remarks are extracted from a letter written by William to his sister, the late Mrs. Groome, of Higham Ferrers.

Bedford, January 5th, 1827.

“ We had a watch-night here last Sunday ; and Mr. Campbell would have me preach. The chapel was never known to be so full on such an occasion, and at such a time of night. I felt somewhat like fear at first, for there were present both church-people and dissenters ; but as soon as I opened my mouth all fear was gone, and I never felt so happy in my life. While I was talking about my blessed Saviour I was as though I was caught up into the third heaven. A stranger, who spoke after me, prayed that I might live with the people still ten years longer. I could hardly say ‘amen’ to that ; but I can say that ‘for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.’ My members in my classes are praying that my life may be spared : yet I frequently long ‘ to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.’ ”

‘The opening heavens around me shine
With beams of sacred bliss ;
While Jesus shews His mercy mine,
And whispers,—I am His.’”

During the latter part of William’s life growing infirmities incapacitated him from taking long journeys; consequently, his appointments on the preachers’ plan were very few. His last attempt to preach was at Radwell, in October, 1832. The respectable family who welcomed him as their guest were highly gratified by this last visit. They greatly admired his characteristic simplicity both in the pulpit and out of it; and were particularly pleased with the concern which he manifested for the welfare of their domestics—as, mingling with them in the kitchen, he addressed to each “a word in season.” This was, indeed, his regular custom; and he probably did as much good in this way, as by his more public exhortations. This visit afforded to himself more than ordinary pleasure. He frequently afterwards spoke

of it with delight ; and fervently prayed for his hospitable friends, that “ the dew of Hermon might descend upon them ; ” and that “ the precious things of the lasting hills ” might be their’s for ever !

Now that “ the schoolmaster is abroad,” and “ the march of intellect ” on its progress,—homely, unvarnished talents like those of William Cumberland are very liable to be underrated. But He who “ confounds the wisdom of the wise ” has condescended successfully to employ such talents in his service ; and this is an irresistible argument in their favour. Let it be remembered, also, that men of humble origin have mainly contributed towards accelerating the spread of truth, and the consequent advancement of knowledge amongst the lower classes of society : many of whom would never have been aroused to a conviction of their deplorable ignorance, would never have felt how much both their safety and their happiness depended on their rescue from its dominion,—but for the plain and heart-searching appeals of those who, accustomed to their habits and

modes of thinking, were, in consequence, well qualified to arrest their attention, to convince their judgments, and to affect their hearts. “Pure and undefiled religion” made tardy progress amongst the mass of the population of this country, whilst the efforts to promulgate it were confined to men of superior education and refined taste. The discerning mind of Wesley soon discovered that his personal exertions to revive scriptural Christianity would avail but little without the co-operation of men of diversified talents;—talents adapted to the condition, taste, and habits of those to whom they might be sent. In obtaining this co-operation he was authorized by the line of conduct adopted by our Lord himself. That divine and unerring Teacher who read the hearts of men; and who knew that the “common people” would the most readily give credence to His sayings, and compose the majority of His adherents; selected as His co-adjutors, not philosophers but fishermen. And it is the glory of Methodism that its founder, in humble imitation of his great Exemplar, established its success by simi-

lar means; thus rendering it “all things to all men, that by all means it might save some.” Whilst, therefore, it is a matter of great congratulation and thankfulness, that the talent of the Methodist ministry has, in no inconsiderable degree, kept pace with the vaunted “march of intellect;” and that heralds with “silver trumpets” are, year after year, adorning, enlivening, and extending its ranks;—it is devoutly to be wished that its goodly company of brave and hardy pioneers may sustain no diminution, nor cease lustily to sound their “rams’ horns,” until the strong holds of ignorance and sin shall be every where overthrown, and the whole earth be filled with the glory of God.

CHAPTER VI.

“Heaven doth with us as we with torches do ;
Not light them for themselves ; for if our virtues
Did not go soith of us, 'twere all alike
As if we had them not.”

No unenlightened writer has studied the workings of the human heart with greater skill than Shakspeare. The above quotation strictly accords with the precepts of Christ ; and strikes at the root of a popular and prevailing opinion, that in his intercourse with others the Christian should avoid all attempts to exhibit or to recommend his religion, lest he incur the charge of ostentation or proselytism. The fashionable doctrine of the liberals of the present day is, that a man may think on the subject of religion as he pleases ; but he must not divulge his

thoughts. He may treasure up stores of heavenly wisdom ; but he must in no wise dispense them to his neighbour who has none. The celestial fire may be pent up in his breast, until its intensity consume him : but to give it vent, though he might thereby save both himself and others, is by no means to be allowed. How repugnant is this to the benevolent designs of Christianity ! how opposed to the counsel and conduct of Him who “went about doing good,” and whose admonitions and steps all who “profess and call themselves Christians” are bound to follow.

William Cumberland was a Christian indeed. He had light, and he dared not conceal it : he had fervent piety, and he could not but diffuse its savour : he had the love of God in his heart, and its influence constrained him to “love his brother also.” It was impossible for any one in his circumstances to be better acquainted with the word of God. His bible was literally “the man of his counsel ;” his inseparable companion. If he was visited in his shop, it lay upon the counter : if he was visited at meal

times, it was in his hand, or on the table. Whatever he read he treasured up in his heart ; and “out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth spake.” Was a Christian friend the visitor ? After giving him his customary benediction, he would say,—“Here’s a blessed passage ; here’s food for the soul :” and would then read it, and delightfully comment upon it. His prayers strikingly evinced a very intimate acquaintance with the holy scriptures ; and so did his occasional correspondence. The very first letter which he wrote to one of his daughters began thus :—“‘ My child, if thy heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine.—Know thou, then, the God of thy father ; and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind : if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee ; but —*remember*—‘ if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever.’ ”

The substance of a communication from Mrs. Allison, his elder daughter, may here be properly introduced ;—and it is introduced the more readily, because the testimony of all who knew the man fully corroborates the truth of

every statement ; and completely divests it of the least partiality.

" Owing to the spirituality of my dear father's conversation, our shop was frequented by Christians of all denominations—both rich and poor ; and not one was sent empty away. The word of God dwelt in him richly ; and from that he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Scores and hundreds have been blessed by hearing the precious words which fell from his lips. Yet if any who came to converse upon religious subjects staid longer from their families or business than he thought was consistent, he would invariably admonish them of the value of precious time. He hated idleness in every form, and would urge them to be diligent in their daily calling ; indeed, in his usual plain way, would tell them to go, if a hint did not suffice.

" Whenever any one took the name of God in vain, or swore an oath in his presence, I never

recollect that, in a single instance, my father suffered them to leave the shop or his company without a sharp reproof, and a solemn warning that, if they died in that state, they must perish for ever. Indeed those who were acquainted with his character dared not, or seldom dared, to do it. It was well known that he feared not the face of man, having his God always before his eyes.

“ My father never omitted family prayer ; and his petitions, whilst engaged in this duty, were most affecting and tender ; animating and enlivening. None could be present without almost feeling the holy fire which burned within his soul. He had a great deal of scripture by heart ; and never was at a loss to suit his language to every occasion in life.

“ He was always one of the first in the house of God at the hour of worship ; and never suffered even business to prevent his attendance on the outward means. If, as it often happened, a customer came in when he was on the point of starting, he would say,—‘ You will excuse me, but I must beg you to be quick ; as

I am going to chapel.' As all knew the man, none were offended; so high did his character stand in their esteem. Sometimes his late pious wife would remonstrate with him respecting his bluntness; when he would say:—' My dear, you know that the soul and its concerns are of the most importance; and I believe the Lord will send us plenty of customers. We must first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and then other things will be sure to be added.'

" My father loved his ministers much; and when the cause was low in Bedford, as he was prosperous in business, he kept one preacher in his turn, for some years. To these seasons of social intercourse he always looked back with the most lively remembrance; and often adverted to them as being amongst the most delightful periods of his life. It is well known that, so far as his means allowed, he never withheld his hand from the support of the cause very liberally; for he would say, when conversing on the subject,—' I well remember a lesson which I had some time ago, and I dare

not do less.—A member of my class having absented himself, I went to see after him; when he told me that he had made up his mind to meet no more; but that instead of paying his class money, he should lay by a penny a week to buy a pig. Convinced that, in such a state of mind, he could have but little desire to save his soul, I said to him,—Well: try the pig. He did so. I called frequently to see him. The pig grew a very fine one, and got very fat: till one day, calculating upon the money it had cost him, and thinking it was time to dispose of it, or to kill it for food, he went to the sty, and found it—dead. ‘There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.’

“The souls of his fellow creatures lay near my father’s heart; of the poor especially, for he was their constant visitor; and it was a very frequent thing for him to be called up in the night to pray with the sick. During the time when the cholera was prevalent in Bedford, he constantly went from house to house, visiting the sick and the dying. Being admonished not to be too venturesome, he replied; —‘I intend to

go : I have faith in my Saviour that no cholera will take me. It must not be said, that in Bedford no man careth for their souls.' Nor did he relinquish his visits to any who were recovering from the attack : but frequently called to warn them of the danger of continuing in sin, and to admonish them to seek the Lord.

" My father used to observe, that he often felt his mind more than ordinarily happy, and more detached from the world, when any thing of a public nature was going forward. This was particularly the case during the late contested election ; which agitated so many minds. — ' Now,' said he, ' is the time to pray to be kept from all evil ; and that the people of God, in particular, may lose nothing whilst they are thus engaged.' And when any amusement (such as the races, fairs, &c.) were collecting together the giddy multitude, how fervently would he pray for the hundreds who passed his window, that they might be mercifully preserved from accident and death.

" The law of kindness was written upon his lips, and his charity towards the failings of

others was often thought to be carried too far : yet his natural bluntness may have occasionally pained the minds of some, though his intention was good ; and it was in his Master's cause.— It was but seldom that he met with unpleasantness from any one ; as his native cheerfulness gained him the esteem of all. Just before he was laid aside, however, something was said to him in the street which disconcerted and somewhat grieved him.—‘ But,’ he observed, ‘ it has done me good. It has led me to pray more for that disposition of mind which, for more than forty years I have been labouring to obtain ;— to yield to the command of my blessed Saviour, —‘ If thine enemy smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also ; and if he offend thee seventy seven times a day, forgive him.’ I did think, though, that the devil had so far done with me, as that I had no outward enemies : but I find I must still be on my guard ; for ‘ he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.’

“ Praise and prayer were frequently the theme of his conversation ; and many can testify

with what delight he would say,—‘ I shall soon have my prayers lost in praise ; ’—while he seemed to be, as he expressed himself,

‘ Fill’d unutterably full
Of glory and of God.’

Years ago, when in perfect health, he would say ;—‘ How I long to depart : all is well, come life or death.’ A person saying to him, —‘ O how I dread the day of judgment ! ’—‘ Yes,’ he replied, ‘ it is a solemn day ; yet I can look forward to it with joyful expectation, and long

‘ To see the Judge with glory crown’d.
And see the flaming skies.’

The joy which was set before him seemed to animate him through life ; and as it was his constant study to keep ‘ a conscience void of offence,’ he could usually rejoice in the most trying circumstances, and would say ;—‘ The God whom I serve will do all things well.’ Indeed his spiritual mindedness seemed to influence and pervade all his actions and conversation, from the time when he first found the Lord, till his death.”

CHAPTER VII.

“Earth and heaven together meet,
Gifts in him and graces join,
Make the character complete,
All immortal, all divine.”

To the interesting and satisfactory communication contained in the preceding chapter little more needs be added to complete the delineation of William Cumberland’s Christian character. In his worldly transactions, he was strictly honest and industrious ; and, from principle, he very scrupulously adhered to the maxim of the great apostle of the Gentiles,— “Owe no man any thing but love.” William reaped the advantage of this conduct. As he never ran into debt, he was never embarrassed in his circumstances. And after the approach of

old age had warned him of the necessity of retiring from active business of a secular nature, he was truly thankful to have granted to him, by the Trustees of the Bedford Charity, in the year 1828, one of the alms houses founded by the ever-memorable Sir William Harpur, for the relief of decayed tradesmen : which house, with the weekly allowance towards his support, furnished from the funds of the same charity, and the little he was enabled to save out of the industry of former years, rendered him comfortable through life.

His affectionate solicitude for the young deserves special notice. Never did he neglect any opportunity to give them suitable advice and encouragement. A note has been sent to his biographer, stating the following fact.—

“ In the month of June, 1793, William Cumberland met a person about six miles from Bedford, going to an annual fair. As it was in a sequestered place, he pointed out the danger the

individual was in ; reminded him of the piety of his deceased parent, who had been a member of the Methodist connexion ; and urged the propriety of following the good example which had been set him. The youth listened with attention ; profited by the conversation ; soon afterwards joined the society ; and, to the day of the departure of his friend, retained the most sincere affection for his disinterested zeal in the welfare of the connexion."

The above is only one amongst the many successful attempts made by William to win the young to devote their best days to the service of God. This solicitude was equally apparent in the decline, as in the vigour, of his life. Hence the remarkable fact, that though he was the oldest leader in the town, his crowded classes consisted, principally, of youthful members. They loved him as a father ; they venerated him as a long-tried, valiant champion of the cross ; and they unbosomed to him, without reserve,

all their thoughts and feelings, as to a faithful and a sympathizing friend.

William Cumberland was firmly attached to every part of the Methodist discipline : and that which was the most scrutinizing, he the most esteemed. For many years he met in band ; and as a band-mate was pointed, searching, and faithful. He delivered his soul by declaring to those who met with him, “ whatsoever he thought, whatsoever he feared, whatsoever he heard concerning them.” Band-meetings have often been misrepresented. Two and, occasionally, three persons form a band. The design of their meeting is to obey that command of God,—“ Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed ; ” and when this duty is attended to in a proper spirit, it cannot fail to be productive of beneficial effects. At a love-feast William was in his element : he was usually the first to speak ; and he invariably spoke to edification.

William occasionally indulged himself in social visiting ; and his lively turn of mind caused him to be greeted as a welcome companion.

He always took care to render these visits edifying, by introducing spiritual conversation, and devoting a considerable portion of the time to singing and prayer. Of the former exercise he was particularly fond, and his voice was very melodious.—“ I love singing ; ” he would say, on such occasions, “ for I expect that it will be a great part of our employment in heaven. Does not the scripture talk of ‘ the song of the redeemed ? ’ ” He would then begin,—

“ O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer’s praise.”

It deserves to be recorded here that, whether the social party assembled at his own house or at another’s, however profitable and delightful their employment, if it was the evening appointed for preaching or a prayer meeting, he would never absent himself ; and he invariably invited all present to accompany him. This invitation was usually successful : indeed William was imperative ; and would admit of no denial.—“ If you can find time,” he would urge, “ to visit your friends, you have no ex-

cuse for absenting yourselves from the house of God."

Although from principle a staunch and unbending Methodist, he was no bigot. He loved all who loved his Lord ; to whatever section of the church of Christ they belonged. And he found that love begets love. Christians of every denomination acknowledged and revered his unostentatious and lively piety ; whilst the thoughtless and the gay would confess,—“ If there is a truly good man in Bedford, William Cumberland is he.”

Had he, then, no failings ? Unquestionably he had. It has been hinted by some, that he occasionally betrayed an unbecoming warmth of temper ; especially when his wishes were thwarted. Possibly he might ; for he was a man of like passions with others : but his biographer, during nine months of frequent intercourse, never witnessed it. On one occasion, indeed, when William had been particularly tried, he bitterly lamented having suffered his mind to be harassed about it : but the very next day he was heard to praise the Lord for having

given him the complete victory over every unhallowed feeling; for having emptied his heart of whatever was contrary to love. His chief failing undoubtedly was, an exuberance of charity towards all who wore the garb of sanctity; especially if they had the gift of ready utterance upon the topic of experimental religion. He could readily distinguish between gifts and grace; but it was difficult to convince him that a considerable share of the former might be possessed where every spark of the latter was extinguished. Even when imposition was detected, he was exceedingly slow to believe that a wicked and deceitful heart could occupy the breast of one from whose alluring conversation and fluent prayers he had received so much comfort and delight. William was perfectly aware that his brethren thought him, at times, too lenient towards those who merited severer reproof. Freely conversing upon this subject a few weeks before his death, he said;—“They tell me that I am too charitable. It may be so; but I often think of the words of Him whose compassion faileth not,—‘Blessed are

the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.' And seldom do I bend my knees before the throne of divine grace, without praying,

• Teach me to feel another's woe ;
To hide the faults I see :
That mercy I to others show,
That mercy show to me.'"

An excess of charity towards the sins of others is a censurable evil; being likely to interfere with the exercise of that salutary discipline which those who watch over the souls of men are imperatively bound to administer in cases affecting the purity and the character of a religious body. The scriptural injunction,—“ Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly,” must not be violated; whilst another injunction, from the same unerring source,—“ If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,” should operate as an effectual check upon that unforgiving persistence, that godless severity, which would consign to perpetual ignominy and exclusion from

all future confidence the man who, through severe temptation, has stumbled and fallen. William Cumberland's hatred to sin was only exceeded by his love to the sinner ; and often has he sung, with considerable fervour,

“ O may I learn the art
With meekness to reprove ;
To hate the sin with all my heart,
But still the sinner love.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“Father of everlasting grace,
Thou hast in us thine arm reveal’d,
Hast multiplied the faithful race,
Who, conscious of their pardon seal’d,
Of joy unspeakable possest,
Anticipate their heavenly rest.”

RELIGION like that enjoyed by the subject of this memoir will be the more purified, the more it is tried. It does not exempt its possessor from the afflictions incidental to this vale of tears; but it fortifies the mind against every temptation to murmur or repine at the dispensations of an unerring Providence. William had his trials, but they only strengthened his faith in God. During his long pilgrimage, he had many a conflict with his grand adversary;

many a disappointment in his expectations from the world ; many a proof of the necessity of exercising self denial, and of watching over his heart with a godly jealousy. But being “ steadfast in the faith,” he was enabled to resist evil in whatever shape it might assume ; and was prepared to find the world to be vain and delusive. And when his heaviest trial came upon him ; when the wife of his bosom, the sharer of his sorrows and his joys, was removed to joys infinitely greater than his warmest and most assiduous affection towards her could communicate ;—whilst his heart bled at the agonizing separation, his faith whispered,—“ We only part to meet again :” and with the resignation of Job, he could adopt his language, —“ The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

But William rarely adverted to his trials. The only allusion to them found in the record from which frequent quotations have been made, is contained in the following extract :—“ Blessed be the Lord, I have never wanted a friend since I have known the Saviour. It has

been my business all these years to please my Master ; and I have been as well off in adversity as in prosperity. My trials, and crosses, and losses have been all gain.”

In reference to the progress of Methodism in the town of Bedford he says,—“ When I first joined the Methodists, they were in a low dull way : about forty-five in society : and so they remained for fifteen years. Mr. Joseph Harper travelled here in 1782, and left that number. After the lapse of fourteen years he was again appointed to the circuit ; when he found precisely the same number still. I began to feel uneasy ; and cried earnestly to the Lord to revive His work. The Lord in His own time heard and answered. About thirty years ago, whilst Mr. Pilter was preaching, two females stood up in the congregation, and declared what God had done for their souls. Methodism in Bedford has been gradually rising ever since ; and I believe it will rise. The cause of God lay near my heart, and I have met with many discouragements ; but, blessed be the Lord, hope hath sprung up. We have given a long

pull, and a strong pull, and a pull altogether, and by that means we have pulled out [enlarged our borders] and ‘hitherto the Lord hath helped us.’ ”

William, when conversing with his Christian friends, frequently adverted to the period when Methodism first began to revive in Bedford ; and always expressed it to be his opinion, that the zealous and indefatigable exertions of the late Rev. John C. Leppington mainly contributed to effect it. Mr. Leppington was appointed by the Conference of 1801 to the charge of the circuit. He was then in the vigour of his days : he laboured for three years with persevering assiduity, in conjunction with his excellent colleagues (the Rev. Messrs James Burley, Benjamin Gregory, Robert Finney, Joseph Hallam, and Robert Pilter) to promote the interests of the societies ; and he did not labour in vain. At the September visitation of the classes in 1801, he found three hundred and fifty-one members ; and one hundred and forty-three were added during the following year ; one hundred and twenty-four

during the next; and at the June visitation in 1804, the total numbers were raised to eight hundred and forty-seven:—being a net increase during the three years (“exclusive of all removals, deaths, and backslidings”) of four hundred and ninety-six; many of whom still live to praise the Lord that, through the instrumentality of this servant of Christ and his fellow labourers, they were led to forsake sin, and to walk in the paths of holiness.

From entries made by Mr. Leppington in the society book, compared with an interesting Memoir of the late Mrs. Mary Pilter, by her husband the Rev. Robert Pilter, in the Methodist Magazine for April, 1813, it appears that the revival of religion in the town of Bedford took place in January, 1804. At the preceding Conference the number of members in the town-classes amounted to forty-six [only]; who were under the care of William Cumberland and another leader: but, through the blessing of God on the labours of His servants, this number increased during the year to one hundred and eight; and three additional leaders were

appointed. Mrs. Pilter (then Miss Howard) was one of the females to whom William alludes as having borne public testimony to the power of saving grace. The following extract from her memoir, whilst it throws additional light upon the circumstances under which the revival commenced, so strikingly exhibits the exemplary modesty of its writer in concealing the fact, that he himself was the honoured instrument of her conversion, that its insertion will need no apology.

“—From this bondage of unbelief it pleased God happily to release her on Monday evening, January 21st, 1804. During the meeting of the society after preaching, the Lord was graciously present to heal the broken in heart, and bind up their wounds. The distress of her soul had long been very great; through the whole of this meeting she had been agonizing with God, and had formed a resolution not to rest till pardoning love should fill her heart.

The preacher, observing her peculiar distress, exhorted her to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for a present salvation. She pathetically and vehemently cried out,—‘Lord help me to believe! Lord, I *will* believe; I will believe!’ The preacher and the whole society immediately engaged in fervent prayer in her behalf. At that moment the mighty power of God seemed to shake the place. Four souls found the ‘pearl of great price,’ and the sound of victory and joy filled the chapel! Miss Howard was one of the first that struggled into the glorious liberty of the children of God: and in the first moments of boundless transport, and rapturous amazement, she loudly exclaimed,—‘Bless the Lord; bless the Lord! He has pardoned all my sins!’ The change of her mind was visibly portrayed in her countenance; and from this memorable period, she ‘went on her way rejoicing.’

The days which exhibited to the good

Methodists of Bedford, scenes like those described by Mr. Pilter, were indeed “golden days;” and none hailed their appearance with more animated delight than did the subject of this memoir. He threw his whole soul into the work ; and was present at every prayer meeting, exhorting the penitents to believe in Christ, and confirming the souls of the new disciples. The chapel, which had been occupied by the Methodists for forty years, became too strait for them : but they gave substantial proof of their gratitude to God for this special visitation of His grace, in their liberal contributions towards a new and more commodious one ; which was soon erected on its site. Methodism continued to prosper from that time ; and the pleasing circumstance that the number of members in the town-classes was never afterwards less than that which was left by Mr. Leppington, is an irrefragable proof that the work was genuine.

William Cumberland lived to see greater things than these ; for he frequently testified that his last days were his best days. He con-

sidered that the appointment of the Rev. Maximilian Wilson to the circuit in 1827 was especially sanctioned by God; and the means of raising Methodism to an elevation to which it had never before attained. Not that he underrated the labours of other valuable ministers (the predecessors of Mr. Wilson) through whose zealous efforts that which was the Bedford circuit in 1804 had since become four circuits: the aggregate number of members in which, at the Conference, 1827, amounted to sixteen hundred and fifty-five. Of this number, four hundred and eighty-four belonged to the Bedford circuit; which was raised, through the efficient exertions of Mr. Wilson and his colleagues, during the three years of his appointment, to seven hundred and fifty. Early in 1830, William wrote a letter to his nieces containing the following observations:—“I hope you are well in body and soul; and waiting for ‘the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’ We are getting on famously at Bedford. Numbers are joining the society; and such crowds flock to our

prayer meetings as I never saw before."

Results similar to those which succeeded the former revival followed this. The chapel (though it had undergone, since its erection, repeated enlargements) became far too small for the multitudes who flocked to hear. Accordingly, in 1832, the present commodious and elegant chapel, which is considerably larger than any within the same distance of the metropolis, northward, was erected under the superintendance of the Rev. Joseph Lewis; and opened by the Rev. Messrs. Robert Newton, Theophilus Lessey, Maximilian Wilson, and Mr. William Dawson, (of Barnbow, near Leeds) on Friday the 5th, and Sunday the 7th of October. These were glorious days to William Cumberland. Rapidly was his health failing him; conscious did he feel that his end was fast approaching;—yet he ardently longed, and fervently prayed, that he might be permitted to see the day of its opening;—“he saw it, and was glad.” The first prayer offered up in the new chapel was offered up by him. This day he described as one of the best he had ever en-

joyed. The singing, especially, delighted him.—“These hallelujahs,” said he, “ravish my heart; yet what are they, compared with what I shall hear above? where all the hosts of heaven shout—‘ Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.’” At the close of the Sabbath services, when Mr. Dawson had been praying with those under conviction, some of whom were brought to believe to the saving of the soul; he said,—“Now I am satisfied, and willing to depart; mine eyes having seen the salvation of God. And his heart exulted on ascertaining, that all the ministers employed on that occasion would be hailed by some who then composed their congregations as their spiritual fathers, at the last day.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Servant of God, well done !
Rest from thy loved employ ;
The battle fought, the victory won,
Enter thy Master’s joy.”

WILLIAM, elated with the cheering scenes he had witnessed at the chapel opening, lost sight of his bodily weakness, and engaged to preach at Radwell the fortnight following. An account of this visit has been already given.* Happy as he there felt himself, the excitement was succeeded by a debility from which he never recovered : and his frequent absence from the public means, especially the evening ser-

* See page 41.

vices, prepared his Christian brethren for the loss they were soon to sustain. He only attended one love-feast in the new chapel, at which he said ;—“Christian friends, it is all well. When my body suffers, I think I shall soon be with Jesus ; and when I feel better, I think I shall soon be restored again to the church and my friends : therefore it is all well.”

The last service at which he was present in the chapel was during the afternoon of the first Sunday in January, 1833 ; when the covenant was renewed and the sacrament administered to about three hundred and fifty communicants. His feelings on that day were indescribable. Never had he previously witnessed such a sight at Bedford ; never did he enjoy more of the presence of Christ in His ordinances ; never did he feel a stronger assurance that God would revive His work. Many times afterwards did he praise the Lord that ever he was permitted to enjoy that blessed opportunity.

From the above-mentioned period he was confined to his house. In his last letter which he wrote to his neices, dated January the 27th,

1833, he tells them,—“The Lord is taking me down by a pin at a time. I am like a hireling waiting for his wages : yet ‘not my will, but Thine be done !’ No one is better off than myself, a poor sinner. Still the blessed Lord dwells with me : and wheresoever I have been the means of blowing up the spark of love in any one, it was not my doing, but Christ in me. I never can be thankful enough to my blessed Lord, for keeping me all these years. May He bless your souls, and prosper you. I feel my body exceedingly weak, and my cough increases ; but my blessed Lord says,—‘As thy day, so shall thy strength be !’ I have found the Lord to be according to His word for six-and-forty years ; and it would be a sin in me not to believe Him now. Farewell, my dear children : may the love of God burn in your hearts while He talketh with you by the way. I often find it good to be here : but what is this, compared with a happy meeting in heaven. **May I meet you there !”**

Such parts of the document written by William, during his affliction, as have not been in-

terwoven with the memoir, may be here with propriety transcribed.

Meeting in class I have found to be a great blessing to my soul : it has enabled me to love God more, and my brethren better. I have also got good from love-feasts; and especially from visiting the sick and the dying ; from fellowship with the saints ; and from hearing the word of God preached to me.

“ I thank the blessed Lord who hath kept me with His people all these years ; and this through what my blessed Saviour has done for me. ‘ He is my Shepherd ; I shall not want.’ My Saviour and my Father cares for me, and causes the sun to shine on my window as though there were none other in the world but me. I thank the Lord for this house ; and the *Trust* who gave it me. Though it is only a temporary one, yet I think I am as well off as any body under the sun.

“ Forty and six years I have had no fear of

death ; but I have to repent having been so unfaithful to my God for all His mercies towards me a poor sinner. Now I am waiting like a hireling for his wages.

“ Four times eleven and a half
Have I Thy servant been,
Now, blessed Saviour, let me cease
From labour and from sin.

In peace with Thee, and with myself,
And all mankind below,
O let me now from hence depart,
And to Thy kingdom go.”

“ Death appears to me not like an enemy but a friend. Ever since I believed in my Saviour I have not been afraid of death ; but have been longing to depart. When I have been in ecstacies of joy, Satan was bruised under my feet like the five kings whom Joshua and his men trampled under foot. As soon as I believed, the sting of death was withdrawn. It is now no more than a shadow ; and the shadow of a serpent cannot sting you. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that

he came into the world to deliver us from the fear of death.

“ Since I have been in *this* school of Christ, I have had many lessons to learn. I have one of the greatest importance now to learn, viz: to be submissive and passive under the hand of my heavenly Father. I am afraid that my will wants to have a hand in it; and that sometimes I am dictating to God what I would have Him to do with me. It is true, I long to be released from my pilgrimage, and to be with Him whom my soul loveth. Yet, Lord,

‘I would not Thee offend ; Thou know’st my heart,
Nor one short day before my time depart.’

When I am worse in body I feel glad, and think I am going: when I am better I feel sorry; therefore I am afraid my will has a hand in it. May the ever blessed God direct me and keep me. O that I may hold out a little longer; until with my old friend Jacob I can say,—‘ I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord ; ’ then—gather up my feet, and give up the ghost.

“ When I was young and in health, I served God with great delight ; and was glad when they said to me,—‘ Let us go up unto the house of the Lord : ’ now I am laid at the King’s gate, covered with sackcloth and ashes, crying with a loud and bitter cry :—but I hope, and believe, and know, that I shall soon be mounted on the King’s horse, riding through the street of the city in royal apparel, with a crown of gold upon my head.”

In the many profitable interviews with this venerable saint with which his biographer was favoured, he was usually resigned, patient, and in perfect peace.

“ Not a cloud did arise
To darken the skies,
Or to hide for one moment, his Lord from his eyes.”

—“ You find me like a hireling, Sir,” observed William, in reply to an expression of regret that he should be confined to his house ;—“ my

work is done, and I am waiting for my wages.” His sole anxiety was in reference to his classes.—“I am sorry I cannot meet them,” he said, “but they must not be as sheep without a shepherd: do not defer the appointment of other leaders under the supposition that I shall ever recover—for I am going home.” It was no easy task to provide suitable leaders for eighty persons, all of whom had been accustomed to one; and that one—William Cumberland. But to his advice they were accustomed to yield: and they did so, however reluctantly, in the present instance. Then was every anxious care banished from his mind, when he found them all so willing to submit to the necessary regulations, and to receive with affection those who were appointed to fill the station which he so long had occupied to their edification and profit. He met his Sunday class whilst his strength would permit, and they subsequently continued to meet in the house until it proved too wearying to exhausted nature.

The same devotional spirit, the same anxiety to improve time, which he exhibited when in

health, characterized his latter days. If a visitor began to converse upon any subject but religion, he would immediately and abruptly say,—“This will never do. Get the bible, and one of us will read : or else we will pray.” Frequently on these occasions has he engaged in prayer when his trembling knees would hardly allow him to raise himself up again. He sang, too, as long as he was able; and when a friend observed,—“ You have almost done singing here : ” he replied,—“ Yes: but when in heaven,

‘ There I shall sing more sweet, more loud,
And Christ shall be my song.’ ”

Then, calling every one present by name, he asked them pointedly,—“ Is not this heaven worth contending for ? A throne ? A crown ? ”

It was truly delightful to visit him. A look of love played upon his countenance, while his firm grasp of the hand anticipated the welcome which proceeded from his lips. Yet during the last six weeks of painful suffering, although he would answer satisfactorily every question rela-

tive to his state and prospects, he was quite inadequate to any lengthened conversation. He evidently wished to be alone. He felt his mind in solitude more composed and tranquil. He was waiting, praying, longing to depart. Upon this one object his happy soul was intent. He had given up the world, his friends, his relatives; and he patiently waited till his change should come.

He was graciously preserved through the whole of his affliction, from all severe temptation. On its being said to him,—“Satan is not permitted to assault you ;” he replied,—“If he were, I should know he is a liar ; and I believe God, who hath said,—‘When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, &c.’ and He is my hope and confidence. Yes :

‘ ’Tis all my hope and all my plea,
For *me* the Saviour died.’ ”

On the Sunday previous to his death he suffered much pain ; but he never said so, except when asked.—“I want,” he exclaimed, “to triumph in Christ ; but my body keeps me

down. Still it is a consolation to know that the apostle, when alluding to those who had died in the Lord, does not say,—‘These all died in *triumph*,’ but ‘These all died in *faith*.’ Here I fix myself; and here will I trust.”

As death approached, his prospects brightened.—“Now,” said he, “I shall soon see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. I am going to the ‘multitude which no man can number,’ when one hour in eternity will teach me more than I have ever learned here during all the years of my life. O how I anticipate the welcome change; for I believe that I shall there know all in a moment; know every one that has died in the faith; know St. Paul as well as the most intimate friend.”

About twenty-four hours before he exchanged mortality for life, he appeared in a state of ecstacy; and looking earnestly upon his children, he said to them,—“I have seen your mother. O the glory, the glory! I suppose it must have been a dream, but she spoke to me.”—“And what did she say!” enquired his daughters.—“I cannot tell you: but I know. O the

glory ; the glory ! I never saw your mother look so beautiful. Blessed be God, I shall soon be there."

The day before he died he sent a message to his minister expressive of a wish to see him immediately. The summons was instantly obeyed. On entering the chamber, William stretched towards him his attenuated arm, and greeting him with a heavenly smile, he exclaimed,— "This is the day I have longed for. Rejoice with me that I am so near home.—My speech is failing me," he added, with great difficulty, "and I sent for you to tell you that I wish you to preach my funeral sermon, and from this passage." He took the bible from his pillow, and attempted to open it ; but he could not. His minister took it, and William said feebly,—"Isaiah--twenty-fifth--chapter--read--read." It was read accordingly. The minister paused at the eighth verse. "Go on—go on," said his dying friend. The ninth verse was read,— "And it shall be said in that day, Lo this is our God ; we have waited for Him, and He will save us : this is the Lord ; we have waited

for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." At the close of this verse, William said,—“Enough; that is the passage.”—“And have you any dying advice to give the people?”—“Tell them—Christ—is precious! Tell them—to meet—me—in heaven!” He sank exhausted on the pillow.—“I will pray with you,” said his minister. The venerable saint bowed assent, and whilst thus engaged, each felt himself

“—Quite on the verge of heaven.”

The last who prayed with him was his friend Mr. John Howard; who, in the following note, describes the interview.

“ I have had the great satisfaction and profit of an acquaintance with the late pious and most exemplary William Cumberland for twenty-five years. He was a man of great spirituality of mind; and always peculiarly fervent and diversified in prayer, which rendered him so well qualified to visit the sick. In this duty

he much delighted ; and persevered in it for a long series of years with exemplary diligence and success. In his last illness I visited him several times. He was always happy, and rejoiced in the prospect of dissolution. I used to read a portion of Kempis, or some of the scripture promises in the Daily Food for Christians. He would bless God for such supports, and said, —“Ah, your excellent grandmother always kept such books in her pocket ; and she rejoiced in the food for the soul which they supplied.” A few hours before his departure I spoke and read to him, as usual ; after which, his speech having failed him, he made a signal which I did not understand. His daughter, who stood by, said,—“It is for you to pray.” Never shall I forget the feelings of my own heart at this solemn juncture. I was praying when this departing saint was very near indeed to the mansions of bliss, and about to join in hosannahs and everlasting praises around the throne of God and the Lamb. As I turned away my eyes from this venerable Christian, I felt as some have expressed themselves concerning Mr.

Wesley,—that I should perhaps never look upon his like again. And I shall always consider myself peculiarly honoured in being the last who prayed with so eminent a believer. The very memory of such a man is truly blessed.”

The mortal struggle of this venerable saint was painful. But God was with him, and all his sufferings ceased, on Thursday morning, June the 6th, 1833, about eleven o'clock ; when his immortal part took its place amongst “the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Let all who revere the memory of William Cumberland imitate his piety towards God, and benevolence to man : let them apply to the same exhaustless source for wisdom to direct, and grace to preserve, their steps ; and they will realize the same support in life's last hour, and be numbered with the saints in glory everlasting.

THE biographer now closes these imperfect Memorials by inserting the following communication from the amiable pastor of the church and congregation assembling at the Old Meeting, Bedford, who, in occupying for nearly half a century a situation formerly held by the renowned John Bunyan, has constantly exemplified, in at least an equal degree, the piety and the charity which he so justly commends.

TO THE REV. J. GREEVES.

“ My dear Sir,

“ As you request a testimony from my pen to the character of your deceased friend, I most readily comply.

“ From my knowledge of Mr. William Cumberland for more than forty years, I believe him to have been an ornament to our common faith, and an exemplary member of the Methodist society; with liberal feelings towards Christians of other denominations, and charity towards all men. I wish we had a town full of such pro-

fessors of religion : I should love and venerate them, to whatever society they belonged.

“ His attention to the cases of the afflicted, to whom he was an interpreter, one of a thousand ; the fervor of his prayers for them and his readiness to do them good in every way, and especially in promoting the salvation of their souls whenever he could have access to them, rendered him eminent amongst the most useful followers of HIM, ‘ who went about doing good.’ I saw him in his last sickness, and his faith and fervor, love and kindness, were correspondent to the tenor of his life.

“ I am glad you think of publishing some memorial of him, and hope it will be blessed in exciting many to follow his example, as that of one who through faith and patience is now inheriting the promises.

I am, with sincere respect,
Your brother in the bonds of the gospel,
SAMUEL HILLYARD.”

“ *Harpur Street, Dec. 21.*”

THE END.

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